# Welcome to South India & Kerala

Welcome to South India & Kerala. This section provides an overview of the region, including maps, tourist attractions, and travel tips.

## South India & Kerala Map

South India & Kerala Map

## South India & Kerala's Top 12 Need to Know

South India & Kerala’s Top 12 Need to Know

## What’s New

What’s New

## If You Like...

If You Like...

## Month by Month

Month by Month

## Itineraries

Itineraries

## Booking Trains

Booking Trains

## Yoga, Spas & Spiritual Pursuits

Yoga, Spas & Spiritual Pursuits

## Volunteering

Volunteering

## Travel with Children

Travel with Children

## Regions at a Glance

Regions at a Glance

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## MUMBAI (BOMBAY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benaulim</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agonda</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palolem</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patnem</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MAHARASHTRA

### Northern Maharashtra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasik</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurangabad</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellora</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajanta</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalgaon</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagpur</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Southern Maharashtra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Konkan Coast</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheran</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonavla</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla &amp; Bhaja Caves</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolhapur</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GOA

### Panaji & Central Goa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panaji (Panjim)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Goa</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### North Goa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mapusa</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candolim</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calangute &amp; Baga</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjuna</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assagao</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagator &amp; Chapora</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morjim</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aswem</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandrem</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arambol (Harmal)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### South Goa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margao</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandao</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colva</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## KARNATAKA & BENGALURU

### Southern Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengaluru (Bangalore)</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysuru (Mysore)</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandipur National Park</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Karnataka Coast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mangaluru</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmasthala</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udupi</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malpe</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jog Falls</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gokarna</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Central Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hampi</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosapete (Hospet)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubballi (Hubli)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Northern Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badami</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijapura (Bijapur)</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidar</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## TELANGANA & ANDHRA PRADESH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Bhongir .......................... 243
Warangal .......................... 244
Palampet .......................... 244
Andhra Pradesh .......... 245
Vijayawada ..................... 245
Nagarjunakonda .............. 248
Visakhapatnam .............. 249
Tirumala & Tirupati ...... 252

Kerala .................. 255
Southern Kerala ............ 257
Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) ........................................ 257
Kovalam .......................... 271
Varkala .......................... 275
Kollam (Quilon) .............. 279
Alappuzha (Alleppey) ..... 282
Kottayam ...................... 288
The Western Ghats .......... 290
Periyar
Wildlife Sanctuary .......... 290
Munnar .......................... 294
Central Kerala ............ 298
Kochi (Cochin) ............. 298
Thrissur (Trichur) ........ 312
Northern Kerala .......... 315
Kozhikode (Calicut) ..... 315
Wayanad Region .......... 316
Kannur & Around ........ 320
Bekal & Around .......... 322
Lakshadweep .............. 323

Tamil Nadu & Chennai .... 324
Chennai (Madras) .......... 327
Northern Tamil Nadu ...... 346
South of Chennai .......... 346

Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) .......................... 347
Kancheepuram .................. 352
Vellore ......................... 354
Tiruvannamalai .............. 356
Gingee (Senji) ............... 359
Puducherry (Pondicherry) .... 359
Auroville ...................... 366
Central Tamil Nadu .......... 367
Chidambaram ................ 367
Kumbakonam ............... 369
Thanjavur (Tanjore) ...... 372
Trichy (Tiruchirappalli) . 375
Southern Tamil Nadu .......... 379
Chettinadu ................. 379
Madurai ...................... 381
Rameswaram ............... 386
Kanyakumari
(Cape Comorin) .......... 387
The Western Ghats .......... 390
Kodaikanal (Kodai) ...... 391
Coimbatore ................. 395
Coonoor ..................... 398
Kotagiri ...................... 400
Ooty
(Udhagamandalam) .... 400
Mudumalai
Tiger Reserve ............ 406

ANDAMAN ISLANDS .......... 408
Port Blair ..................... 412
Havelock Island .......... 417
Neil Island ................. 421
Middle
& North Andaman .......... 422
Little Andaman ........... 425

South India & Kerala Today .......... 428
History ......................... 431
The Way of Life .......... 446
Spiritual India .......... 452
Delicious India .......... 459
The Great
Indian Bazaar .......... 470
The Arts ..................... 477
Architectural Splendour .... 481
Wildlife & Landscape .......... 484

Scams ......................... 490
Women & Solo Travellers .... 492
Directory A–Z .................. 494
Transport ..................... 507
Health ......................... 516
Language ..................... 522
Index ......................... 534
Map Legend ............... 542

SPECIAL FEATURES
Ancient
& Historic Sites ........ 159
Mysuru Palace in 3D .......... 186
Kerala colour feature .......... 263
Itineraries

Classic Kerala

With its coconut-palm-fringed beaches and lazy backwater boat rides, Kerala can justly claim to be India's most laid-back state. But there's plenty of colour and fun to spice up your tropical idyll – elephant festivals and snake-boat races, Kathakali dance-dramas, quaint colonial-era quarters and a famously flavoursome cuisine.

Spend a day visiting the zoological gardens and museums in the capital, Thiruvananthapuram, aka Trivandrum, before making the half-hour hop to the beach resort of Kovalam. Then shift down another gear at Varkala, a holy town with a dizzying clifftop guesthouse-and-restaurant enclave, where you can chill out with some yoga or surfing. Continue north to Kollam (Quilon) and take the tourist cruise along the canals to Alappuzha (Alleppey) with an overnight stop at the Matha Amrithanandamayi Mission, the pink ashram of 'The Hugging Mother'. Reaching Alleppey, you're at houseboat central. Scout for a houseboat or canoe operator and discover what the sublime backwaters are all about. Continuing north by train to Kochi (Cochin), take the short ferry ride to the old colonial outpost of Fort Cochin. Aromatic seafood barbecues, wonderfully warm homestays, colonial-era mansions, Kathakali shows and the intriguing Jewish quarter at Mattancherry make this a fascinating place to while away a few days.
Goa, Caves & Cities

City lights, historic sites, beachy bliss, jungle adventure and a touch of colonial-era quaintness – this trip will give you the flavour of all that’s best about the south.

Begin in cosmopolitan **Mumbai** (Bombay), Bollywood’s beating heart and home to some of the nation’s best spots to shop, eat and drink. Take a sunset stroll along Marine Dr, a curvaceous oceanside promenade dubbed the ‘Queen’s Necklace’ because of its sparkling night lights, finishing with **bhelpuri** (fried rounds of dough with rice, lentils and chutney) and a neck massage on Chowpatty beach. Catch a ferry to Elephanta Island from Mumbai’s historic Gateway of India to explore its stunning rock-cut temples and the triple-faced sculpture of Lord Shiva.

Next, make your way to the dazzling vineyards of Indian wine country around **Nasik**, sipping on award-winning juice at Grover Zampa or Sula Vineyards, an outside-the-box Indian experience. Continue northeast to explore the ancient cave art at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**, situated within 150km of each other near Aurangabad. The incredible frescoed Buddhist caves of Ajanta are clustered along a horseshoe-shaped gorge, while the rock-cut caves of Ellora – containing a mix of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist shrines – are set on a 2km escarpment. Next stop: the tropical beach haven of **Goa** for some soul-reviving sandcastle therapy. Wander through a lush spice plantation, visit Portuguese-era cathedrals at Old Goa, shop at Anjuna’s colourful flea market and take your pick from dozens of fabulous beach spots, before travelling east to the traveller hot spot of **Hampi** in neighbouring Karnataka. Ramble around Hampi’s enigmatic boulder-strewn landscape and imagine what life here was like when it was a centre of the mighty Vijayanagar empire. Make the long trip down to **Mysuru** (Mysore) to explore the Maharaja’s Palace, one of India’s grandest royal buildings, and shop for silk and sandalwood in its colourful markets. From Mysuru it’s an exciting bus ride across the Western Ghats into Kerala and the **Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**, a pristine forest and jungle reserve and one of the best places in the south to spot wild elephants. Finally, take the hair-raising road down to the coast and make your way to **Kochi**, Kerala’s intriguing colonial-era city, where a blend of Portuguese, Dutch and English history combines with wonderful homestays and a buzzing traveller scene.
A journey through Tamil Nadu is a trip into South India’s spiritual soul.

Delve into the rich history of Chennai (Madras) with a wander around the Government Museum before visiting the ancient Kapaleeshwarar and Parthasarathy Temples. Travel south to beachside Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) and its superb rock-cut shrines carved under the ancient Pallava dynasty. Move inland to Tiruvannamalai, where the Arunachaleshwar Temple is one of India’s largest sacred complexes. Trade in temples for flamboyant churches and cathedrals in the quaint old French seaside colony of Puducherry (Pondicherry) before heading back inland to the stunning Unesco World Heritage–listed medieval temples around Kumbakonam and Thanjavur. Continue to Trichy (Tiruchirappalli), home to the spectacular Rock Fort Temple and the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple. Then head south to Madurai and the incredible Meenakshi Amman Temple, widely reckoned the pinnacle of South Indian temple architecture. Wind down at Kanyakumari, the southern tip of India, with its temple to the virgin sea goddess Kumari.
Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book
Iain Stewart  
Karnataka & Bengaluru, Telangana & Andhra Pradesh  
Iain trained as a journalist and worked as a reporter and restaurant critic in London in the 1990s. He started writing guidebooks in 1997 and has penned more than 60 titles for destinations as diverse as Ibiza and Cambodia. For Lonely Planet, Iain’s worked on books including Mexico, Indonesia, Croatia, Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka and Central America. Other passions include tennis, scuba and freediving. He’ll consider working anywhere there’s a palm tree or two and a beach of a generally sandy persuasion. Home is Brighton, UK, within firing range of the city’s south-facing horizon. He tweets at @iaintravel.
OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

Isabella Noble
Tamil Nadu & Chennai English-Australian on paper but Spanish at heart, Isabella has been wandering the globe since her first round-the-world trip as a one-year-old. Having grown up in a whitewashed Andalucian village, she is a Spain specialist travel journalist, but also writes extensively about India, Thailand, the UK and beyond for Lonely Planet, the Daily Telegraph and others. Isabella has co-written Lonely Planet guides to Spain and Andalucia, and is a Daily Telegraph Spain expert. She has also contributed to Lonely Planet India, South India, Thailand, Thailand’s Islands & Beaches, Southeast Asia on a Shoestring and Great Britain, and authored Pocket Phuket. Find Isabella on Twitter and Instagram (@isabellamnoble).

Kevin Raub
Mumbai (Bombay), Maharashtra Atlanta native Kevin Raub started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for Men’s Journal and Rolling Stone magazines. He ditched the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle for travel writing and has written more than 40 Lonely Planet guides, focused mainly on Brazil, Chile, Colombia, USA, India, the Caribbean and Portugal. Raub also contributes to a variety of travel magazines in both the USA and UK. Along the way, the self-confessed hophead is in constant search of wildly high IBUs in local beers. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram (@RaubOnTheRoad).

Paul Harding
Goa, Kerala As a writer and photographer, Paul has been travelling the globe for the best part of two decades, with an interest in remote and offbeat places and cultures. He’s an author and contributor to more than 50 Lonely Planet guides to countries and regions as diverse as India, Iceland, Belize, Vanuatu, Iran, Indonesia, New Zealand, Finland and – his home patch – Australia.

Sarina Singh
Andaman Islands After finishing a business degree in her hometown of Melbourne, Sarina went to India to pursue a corporate traineeship before working as a journalist. After five years she returned to Australia and completed postgraduate journalism qualifications before authoring Lonely Planet’s first edition of Rajasthan. Apart from numerous Lonely Planet books, she has written for a raft of other publications and has been a scriptwriter and expert commentator. Sarina is also the author of Polo in India as well as India: Essential Encounters. Her award-nominated documentary premiered at the prestigious Melbourne International Film Festival before screening internationally.